

GENERALIZATIONS

The basic assumption upon which this course has been constructed is that the various types of functional mental disorder are best explained as reactions to the sense of personal failure and guilt, some of the reactions being benign and some malignant. The reaction of withdrawal and wishful thinking thus tends to eventuate in the progressive fragmentation of the personality. The reactions of self-deception serve to protect the personality from dissolution, but the outcome is likely to be stabilization on an unsatisfactory basis. The re-action of anxiety and self-blame, on the other hand, even tho it may produce severe disorder, is frequently followed by recovery. The conclusion follows that it is not to be regarded as an evil but rather as a desperate attempt at re-organization analogous to fever or inflammation in the physical organism. Our working hypothesis is therefore that there is an important relationship between reactions of the latter type and those sudden transformations of character which have been so prominent in the history of the Christian Church ever since the days of Saul of Tarsus. Both arise out of a common situation, that of inner conflict and disharmony accompanied by a keen wareness of ultimate loyalties and unattained possibilities. Religious experience as well as mental disorder may thus involve severe emotional disturbance, and mental disorder as well as religious experience, may represent the operation of the healing forces of nature.

If this hypothesis is correct, there should be far-reaching consequences. The closing period of the course should therefore be occupied with an attempt to consider it in the light of the factual material which has been presented.

The cases included in this volume, supplemented by cases worked up by students, may therefore be used to check this hypothesis. Even tho they have been selected arbitrarily and even tho the number is not sufficient to satisfy statistical requirements a method of attack may nonehteless be exemplified.

The following questions are suggested:

1. In how many of these cases do you find evidence of a sense of guilt as a primary factor in the disturbance?

(This question will require a clarification of the concept. Consider particularly the case of the Back-slider in the light of Alexander's Psycho-analysis of the Total Personality and Mead's Mind, Self and Society)

2. To what extent is the sense of guilt which you find in these cases rooted in repressed sexuality? in repressed hostility?

(Examine each case in the light of Horney's assertion that repressed sexuality as a factor in mental illness has disappeared with the passing of the Victorian era - "Neurotic Personality of Our Time", p. 62 ff. Then tabulate the findings.)

3. Does the pre-supposition regarding the benign character of the reaction of self-blame hold true in these cases?

(Group the cases according to reaction pattern and tabulate the outcome in each group as it is given in Volume II.)

4. To what extent is religious concern associated with the benign as contrasted with the malignant reaction patterns?

(Classify each case according to the degree of religious concern manifested and tabulate according to reaction pattern.)

5. What form does this religious concern assume? What characteristic ideas and attitudes?

(Examine each case with reference to the presence of ideas of death, of re-birth, of world catastrophe, of cosmic identification, of mission and of other ideas which previous studies have shown to be characteristic. Then tabulate your findings according to reaction pattern.)

6. To what extent can these ideas be explained by previous indoctrination?

7. To what extent is religious concern associated with favorable or with unfavorable outcomes.

On the basis of the findings thus arrived at it may be worth while to consider their implications for certain of the central theological doctrines, such as:

- a) the social and psychological roots of the ideax of God.
- b) the conviction of sin in the process of salvation; other steps involved,
- c) the nature and destiny of man;
- d) the nature and function of religion.

Thruout the course the principles and procedures of psychotherapy should be considered and utilized. They will however need to be pointed up toward the end.

A consideration of the distinctive task of the minister of religion in the domain of psychotherapy will also be of great importance.